

WILDLIFE OF VICTORIA PARK

by John Serrao

CRICKET FROG

Have you ever walked along the shores of one of our ponds, marshes, or swamps and noticed tiny creatures quickly leaping several feet into the water as you approached? These are probably Florida Cricket Frogs, one of our country's smallest amphibians. An adult cricket frog's body is only 3/4 to 1 inch from snout to rear end. The only frog that is smaller in Victoria Park is the diminutive, rarely seen Little Grass Frog which is only 1/2 inch and holds the title of our country's smallest amphibian.

Cricket frogs may be tiny but, for their size,

they're champion jumpers because of their long, oversized, muscular hind legs. When one jumps away to escape, it usually combines several quick, agile jumps in a row and ends up either in the open water or on top of a lily pad. In the latter circumstance, the tiny frog may remain still and permit a closer approach to get a better look at it. The color of its body is rather variable, ranging from brown to tan to green with a darker triangular blotch on top of its head and usually a thick bright green or reddish line down its back.

The easiest ways to distinguish a cricket frog from another small frog are its pointed snout and very warty skin — almost like a toad. And then there's the voice, which almost every Florida resident has probably heard around a boy of water: a series of metallic clicks, exactly like the sound made by clicking 2 stones or marbles together.